CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for searching for products or services listed for sale on a plurality of web sites, said method comprising the steps of:

(1) entering at least one search term as a keyword;

(2) identifying a plurality of web sites to be searched;

(3) providing a database of commands and protocols for entering a keyword in the plurality of web sites;

(4) formatting the keyword so that it can be entered into a native search engine at each of the plurality of web sites; and

(5) entering the formatted keyword and the commands to request a search into the native search engine used at each of the plurality of web sites.

2. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) receiving the search results from the native search engines at the plurality of web sites;

(2)   parsing the search results to extract

information regarding the products or services being

searched for; and

(3)   transmitting the search results to an email

address.

3.   The method as defined in claim 2 wherein the

method further comprises the step of storing the parsed

search results in the database.

4.   The method as defined in claim 3 wherein the

method further comprises the step of adding to the

parsed search results stored in the database so as to

reflect incremental increases in the parsed search

results.

5.   The method as defined in claim 4 wherein the

method further comprises the step of adding a time

stamp to each of the parsed search results.

6.   The method as defined in claim 4 wherein the

method further comprises the step of transmitting the

incremental increases in the parsed search results to

the email address, to thereby avoid resending all the search results for any of the plurality of web sites.

7.   The method as defined in claim 6 wherein the method further comprises the step of batching the transmission of incremental increases in the parsed search results to thereby prevent the email address from constantly receiving search results as they are received.

8.   The method as defined in claim 7 wherein the method further comprises the step of automatically repeating step 5 of claim 1 at a user selectable interval of time to thereby enable the search to be repeated a plurality of times each day.

9.   The method as defined in claim 1 wherein the method further comprises the step of storing the keyword in a database.

10. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein the method of identifying the plurality of web sites to search further comprises the step of selecting from a category of web sites that are associated with the

product or service to be searched for to thereby

eliminate overhead by not having to search all known

web sites.

11.   The method as defined in claim 10 wherein the

method of identifying the plurality of web sites to

search further comprises the step of selecting from a

geographical region in order to limit overhead by not

having to search all known web sites.

12.   The method as defined in claim 11 wherein the

method further comprises the step of selecting a

plurality of web sites to search from a list of

category and region limited web sites.

13.   The method as defined in claim 1 wherein the step

of formatting the keyword so that it can be entered

into a native search engine further comprises the step

of generating an XML document, wherein the XML document

is transmitted to a corresponding one of the plurality

of web sites to thereby enter in a keyword into the

native search engine.

14. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein the method further comprises the step of registering a user, wherein the user provides an email address to which search results are to be transmitted.

15. The method as defined in claim 2 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing a plurality of parsing instruction sets that are stored in the database, wherein each of the plurality of parsing instruction sets corresponds to at least one of the plurality of web sites to be searched.

16. A system for searching for products or services listed for sale on a plurality of web sites, said system comprising:

a database for storing search criteria, parsing instruction sets, and search results;

a search scheduler and balancer for storing searches requests in a repeatable queue, and for controlling the number of searches being performed at any given time in order to avoid overloading system resources; and

an XML search document editor for creating XML documents that are used to enter at least one search

keyword into a native search engine of the plurality of web sites.

17. The system as defined in claim 16 wherein the system further comprises a parser engine for receiving search results from the plurality of web pages and extracting desired information therefrom.

18. The system as defined in claim 17 wherein he system further comprises a batched notification service for receiving parsed search results from the parser engine, wherein the batched notification service stores the parsed search results for a period of time and then transmits the parsed search results to an email address.

19. A method for transmitting an offer for sale of a product or service to a plurality web sites, said method comprising the steps of:

    (1) entering a name for the product or service to be offered for sale;

    (2) entering a description of the product or the service;

(3) storing the name and the description of the product or the service in a database;

(4) identifying the plurality of web sites on which the product or the service is to be offered for sale;

(5) formatting the name and the description of the product or the service so that the terms can be received by each of the plurality of web sites to which the terms are transmitted; and

(6) transmitting the formatted terms to the identified plurality of web sites.

20. The method as defined in claim 19 wherein the method further comprises the step of retrieving commands and protocols from the database to thereby format the terms for each of the plurality of web sites.

21. The method as defined in claim 20 wherein the method further comprises the step of automatically repeating step 6 of claim 19 at a user selectable interval of time to thereby enable the offer of the products or the services to be repeated.

22. The method as defined in claim 21 wherein the method further comprises the step of storing the terms in the database.

23. The method as defined in claim 19 wherein the method of identifying the plurality of web sites to offer the product or the service further comprises the step of selecting from a category of web sites that are associated with the product or service to be offered to thereby eliminate overhead by not having to offer the product or service to all known web sites.

24. The method as defined in claim 23 wherein the method of identifying the plurality of web sites to offer the product or service further comprises the step of selecting from a geographical region in order to limit overhead by not having to offer to all known web sites.

25. The method as defined in claim 24 wherein the method further comprises the step of selecting a plurality of web sites to offer the product or service from a list of category and region limited web sites.

26. The method as defined in claim 19 wherein the step of formatting the name and the description of the product or the service so that the terms can be received by each of the plurality of web sites further comprises the step of generating an XML document, wherein the XML document is transmitted to a corresponding one of the plurality of web sites to thereby enter the terms thereinto.

27. The method as defined in claim 20 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing a plurality of parsing instruction sets that are stored in the database, wherein each of the plurality of parsing instruction sets corresponds to at least one of the plurality of web sites where the product or service is to be offered for sale.

28. A method for searching for information from a plurality of web sites, said method comprising the steps of:

    (1)   entering at least one keyword;

    (2)   identifying a plurality of web sites to be searched;

(3) providing a database of commands for entering the at least one keyword in the plurality of web sites;

(4) formatting the keyword so that it can be entered into a native search engine at each of the plurality of web sites; and

(5) entering into the native search engine used at each of the plurality of web sites the formatted keyword and the commands to request a search.

29. The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1) receiving the search results from the native search engines at the plurality of web sites;

(2) parsing the search results to extract information being searched for; and

(3) transmitting the search results to an email address.

30. The method as defined in claim 29 wherein the method further comprises the step of storing the parsed search results in the database.

31. The method as defined in claim 30 wherein the method further comprises the step of adding to the

parsed search results stored in the database so as to reflect incremental increases in the parsed search results.

32. The method as defined in claim 31 wherein the method further comprises the step of adding a time stamp to each of the parsed search results.

33. The method as defined in claim 32 wherein the method further comprises the step of transmitting the incremental increases in the parsed search results to the email address, to thereby avoid resending all the search results for any of the plurality of web sites.

34. The method as defined in claim 33 wherein the method further comprises the step of batching the transmission of incremental increases in the parsed search results to thereby prevent the email address from constantly receiving search results as they are received.

35. The method as defined in claim 34 wherein the method further comprises the step of automatically repeating step 5 of claim 1 at a user selectable

interval of time to thereby enable the search to be repeated a plurality of times each day.

36. The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the method further comprises the step of storing the keyword in a database.

37. The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the method of identifying the plurality of web sites to search further comprises the step of selecting from a category of web sites that are associated with the information to be searched for to thereby eliminate overhead by not having to search all known web sites.

38. The method as defined in claim 37 wherein the method of identifying the plurality of web sites to search further comprises the step of selecting from a geographical region in order to limit overhead by not having to search all known web sites.

39. The method as defined in claim 38 wherein the method further comprises the step of selecting a plurality of web sites to search from a list of category and region limited web sites.

40. The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the step of formatting the keyword so that it can be entered into a native search engine further comprises the step of generating an XML document, wherein the XML document is transmitted to a corresponding one of the plurality of web sites to thereby enter in a keyword into the native search engine.

41. The method as defined in claim 28 wherein the method further comprises the step of registering a user, wherein the user provides an email address to which search results are to be transmitted.

42. The method as defined in claim 29 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing a plurality of parsing instruction sets that are stored in the database, wherein each of the plurality of parsing instruction sets corresponds to at least one of the plurality of web sites to be searched.

43. A method for searching a plurality of web sites, said method comprising the steps of:

(1) providing at least one search term;

(2)   identifying a plurality of web sites to be searched;

(3)   formatting the at least one search term so that it can be entered into a native search engine at each of the plurality of web sites; and

(4)   requesting a search be performed from each of the plurality of web sites using the at least one search term.

44.   The method as defined in claim 43 wherein the method further comprises the step of repeating the search at the plurality of web sites at a user selectable time interval.

45.   The method as defined in claim 43 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

(1)   receiving the search results from the native search engines at the plurality of web sites;

(2)   parsing the search results to extract information regarding the at least one search term; and

(3)   transmitting the search results to an email address.